

Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Newsletter

Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased to announce we have begun developing a comprehensive conservation plan for the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 mandates a CCP for every refuge in the System. Our final plan will establish management goals and objectives for all refuge programs over the next 15 years, while providing opportunities for compatible, wildlife-dependent public uses. We will evaluate refuge wildlife, habitat, land protection and visitor service priorities during the planning process.

Who is involved in the planning process?

Our local refuge staff in Warsaw, VA will lead the effort, with assistance from our Northeast Regional Office. We will invite other Service experts, as well as representatives from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, to serve on our core planning team.

However, including the local community, our partners, and other stakeholders throughout the planning process is vital to the ultimate success of the plan. In particular, we hope to engage local residents and community leaders in discussing ways the refuge could become a more integral part of the community. If you are interested in helping us plan this refuge's future, we encourage you to participate. You can call, write or email us at any time to provide input. We will also schedule public meetings at various stages of the planning process to facilitate your input.

For example, we are now planning several open houses (see page 2). There, you will have the opportunity to meet the staff, learn about current refuge management, help us identify issues and concerns, and make recommendations about future refuge programs. We hope to see you there!



View of Rappahannock River at Sunset

Sandy Spencer/USFWS

How is a CCP developed?

A summary of the major steps in the planning process follows:

- Select the core planning team members and organize the information underlying the plan.
- Initiate public involvement.
- Develop and analyze alternatives, including current management.
- Prepare and write the plan.
- Monitor and evaluate the plan.

Although completing the plan may last 2 to 3 years, we will review it and revise it at least once every 15 years.

Wood Duck/USFWS



Wood Thrush/USFWS



Savannah Sparrow/USFWS



Bald Eagle/USFWS

These are just a few of the bird species that are a management priority.

General information about the refuge

The Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge is the newest of four refuges that compose the Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The other three refuges are James River, Plum Tree Island and Presquile national wildlife refuges. Rappahannock River Valley Refuge, which comprises 7,712 acres, was established in 1996 to conserve and protect fish and wildlife resources, including endangered and threatened species, and wetlands. Refuge habitats include freshwater tidal marsh, forested swamp, upland deciduous forest, mixed pine forest, and managed grassland.

Three federal-listed threatened or endangered species are found within the refuge boundary: the American bald eagle, shortnose sturgeon, and sensitive joint-vetch. The state's largest wintering population of bald eagles is located within the refuge boundary. Shorebirds, Neotropical migrant songbirds, raptors, and marsh birds also rely on the Rappahannock River corridor during their spring and fall migrations. With help from partners and volunteers, we are restoring native grasslands and riparian forests along the river and tributary streams to provide additional habitat for these important species.

Issues to be addressed in CCP

During our recent team meetings, we began to identify issues that will need to be addressed during the planning process. We would like your feedback on these, or your recommendations for additional ones.

- What is the appropriate amount and distribution of grasslands habitat to manage on the refuge?
- Is there a future for cooperative farming on the refuge?
- How can we reduce deer depredation on adjacent agricultural lands?
- How can we effectively and economically control invasive plants in the area?
- How can we address community concern over the loss of agricultural land production through Service acquisition?
- How should we prioritize lands for acquisition within the approved acquisition boundary?
- How do we effectively conduct outreach to explain our regulations on beach use on the river?
- What administrative facilities, such as an office, visitor contact facilities, and roads are needed to manage the refuge and where should they be located?
- How can we deal with the potentially negative impact of roaming hunting dogs on wildlife, visitors and neighbors?
- How and where do we provide additional recreational activities on the refuge?

Upcoming Open Houses

Monday, December 5

2:00 - 4:00p.m.

Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries, Headquarters Building
VDGIF Board Room
4000 West Broad Street
Richmond, VA

Tuesday, December 6

7:00 - 9:00p.m.

Port Royal Firehouse
Port Royal Volunteer Fire
Department Meeting Room
King Street
Port Royal, VA

Thursday, December 8

2:00 - 4:00p.m. & 7:00 - 9:00p.m.

Rappahannock Community College
Warsaw Campus
Rappahannock Community College
Workforce Development Room
52 Campus Drive (off of Route 360)
Warsaw, VA

*1/2 - hour presentation by refuge staff
will also be part of each Open House.*

All facilities are fully accessible.

For further information please contact:

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

November 2005

